

Reimagining the Delivery of Art Music to Modern Audiences

An Honors Creative Project (HONR 499)

by

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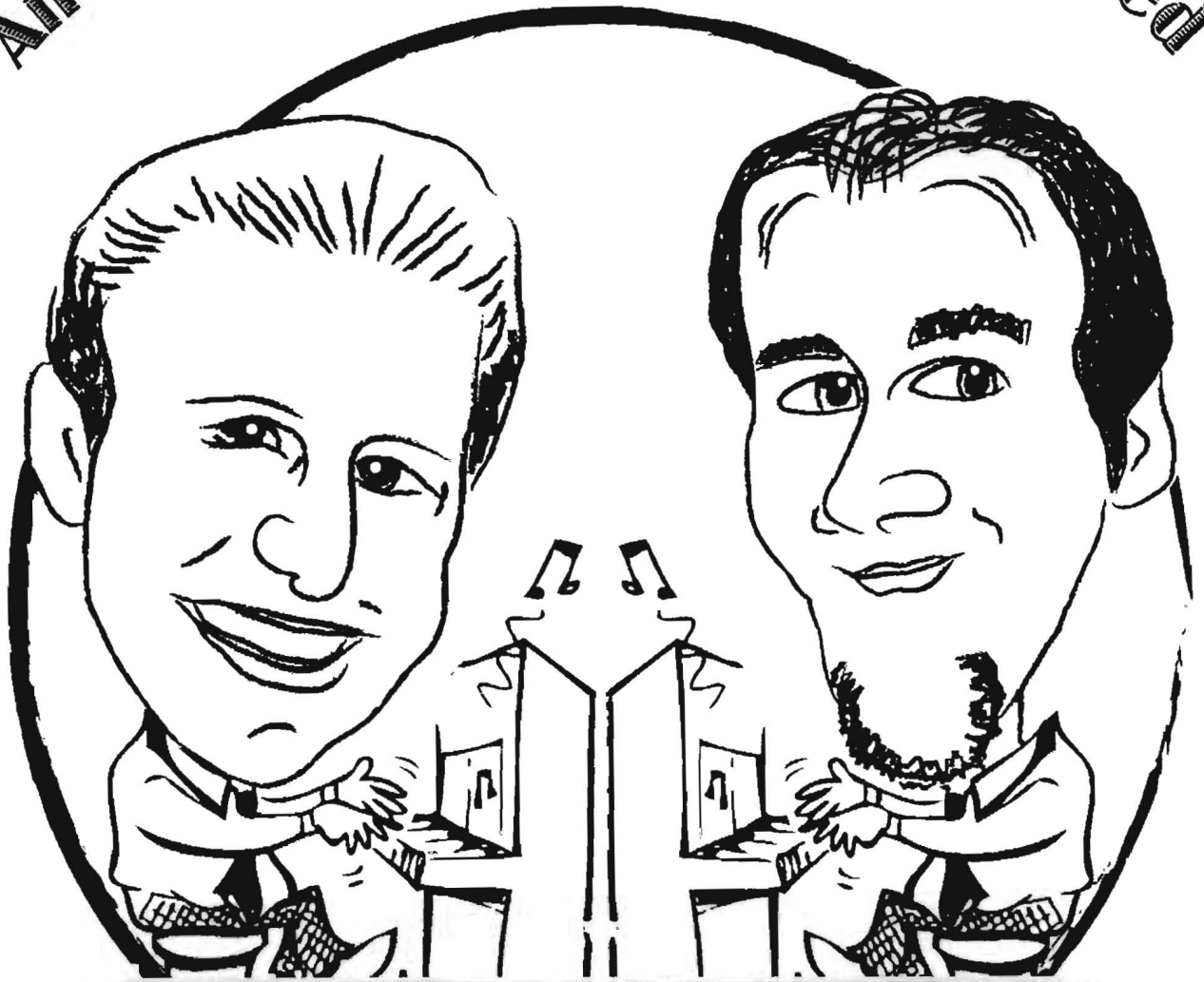
March 2014

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2015

An Evening with Carson and Jarred

A Pops Concert
on 2 Pianos



THURSDAY, JUNE 21, 2012

7:00 P.M.

WEST BRANCH HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

SIGN UP AT THE FRONT DESK

FREE ADMISSION, BUSS FARE IS \$3.00

FEATURING THE MUSIC MADE POPULAR BY FERRANTE AND TEICHER

Highlights include "Autumn Leaves," "Love Story," "Exodus," "Canadian Sunset," and "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head," plus music from Frank Sinatra, *The Sound of Music*, George M. Cohan, and much more!

Abstract

An Evening with Carson and Jarred: A Pops Concert on Two Pianos, was an experiential learning project completed during the summers of 2012 and 2013 in my hometown of Beloit, Ohio. This project required me to synthesize my studies in music, business, and honors classes and apply these concepts in real-world settings. Part One of this project examines the preparation, programming, and performance of the concerts. Part Two explores the business side of producing the events, including legal, marketing, and financial considerations. Finally, Part Three looks at the project from an Honors perspective, investigating the historic uses of classical music in silent film accompaniment and demonstrating how we applied this knowledge to create a silent film for our 2013 concert. The impact of this silent film will be discussed in relationship to how classical musicians can continue to reconsider the delivery of art music to modern audiences.

Acknowledgements

To make this project a reality, I am deeply indebted to my good friend, Jarred Walker. I would also like to thank the numerous members of the West Branch community and the West Branch Alumni Association, without whom this project would not have been possible. Finally, I wish to thank my project advisor, Dr. Ray Kilburn, with whom I have had the great pleasure of studying piano for the last four years.

Part 1: Beyond a Piano Recital

An Evening with Carson and Jarred was first mentioned in email correspondences between my friend, Jarred Walker, and myself during the fall of 2011. During high school, we had become friends in band and choir, in large part because we both played the piano. Yet, in high school we rarely played the piano together. It was not until our senior year of high school that we played our first piano duet. About a year after we had graduated, we began discussing the idea of presenting a concert to our local community as a benefit for our high school alumni association. The concert would feature music in the style of Arthur Ferrante and Louis Teicher, a classical piano duo who became famous by performing classical-styled renditions of music from film, Broadway, and the radio. The so-called “theme team” had not performed in nearly twenty years, making them virtually unknown to members of our age group. But, as we came to discover, their popularity and absence from the spotlight in the last 20 years was a key opportunity to appeal to the elderly and Baby-Boomer age bracket. We were first introduced to Ferrante and Teicher by accident, when, after a performance at an alumni banquet the previous summer, a couple of elderly ladies commented that we reminded them of Ferrante and Teicher. After finding select recordings and videos on YouTube, we realized that there was still a potential market for this type of entertainment.

Clad in red crushed-velvet tuxedos, Ferrante and Teicher astounded audiences with their artistry and antics for over thirty years. During the summer of 2013, I interviewed Steve Taylor, who had performed in one of their backup orchestras. According to him, “Ferrante and Teicher came into the dress rehearsal with little enthusiasm, causing us [the orchestra members] to wonder if they were, in fact, the

legendary duo. They performed the rehearsal in a robotic fashion. But then, on the night of the concert, they turned on the magic. They played with both visible and musical expression, and their flamboyant gestures mesmerized the audience. It was like we were accompanying different people.¹”

Jarred and I realized that the Ferrante and Teicher experience was ideal for our local community, where traditional-style classical music was poorly understood by many people. I had observed this throughout high school when my concerts of strictly classical music were well attended, but poorly understood. Comments such as, “I can’t believe you memorize all that,” indicated that audiences were impressed by my ability to present large amounts of unknown material, but that the audiences made little connection to the material itself. The Ferrante and Teicher experience was the ideal midpoint between a classical concert and a dueling pianos bar.

The choice of venue was simple, since our high school auditorium was the only concert hall in our community with two grand pianos and the capacity to hold a maximum of 900 people. Our first step, once deciding that we would resurrect a Ferrante and Teicher performance, was to find a way to learn two hours of concert material in less than 60 days. Since we were both attending separate universities, we would only have the month of May and part of June to prepare the music. We decided that the arranging of the pieces would need to take place while we were both at school. Most importantly, the arrangements would need to be in a style that would be easy to learn and refine quickly.

¹ Steve Taylor, 2013, Interview by author, Stow, OH, June 8.

To accomplish this, we developed a technique of classical improvisation using lead sheets. Lead sheets are types of musical scores that only show the melody and chord symbols for the harmony. We derived the idea from our observation of Ferrante and Teicher's performances. We noticed that the performances varied slightly between recordings and videos. Basically, Ferrante and Teicher were improvising using seemingly sophisticated, yet standardized classical techniques. We devised a list of techniques derived from our study and performance of classical pieces and then noted which practices were employed by Ferrante and Teicher:

Given the following example from "Climb Ev'ry Mountain"

C D G



The following are examples of techniques used for presenting this melody

Octaves in both hands



Filled octaves in both hands

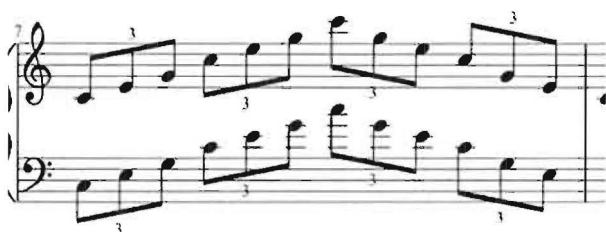


Solo style (RH single note melody and LH accompaniment)



While one piano plays the melody, the following are examples of accompaniment techniques played by the other piano

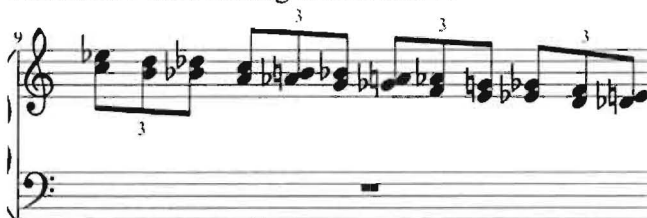
Two-handed arpeggios



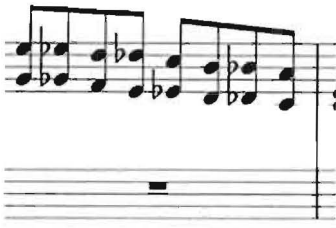
Cross-over arpeggios



Chromatic descending thirds scales



Descending sixths



Arpeggios accented by a chromatic lower neighbor tone



Cascading arpeggios



Diatonic third and sixth scales



Blocked chords



Another important visual technique that we patterned after Ferrante and Teicher was playing a melodic line between the two of us, switching players every few notes. This can

be found in the “Give My Regards to Broadway” section of the “George M. Cohan Medley,” as well as in “Smile” and the “Hedwig’s Theme” portion of the “Toast to John Williams.” By simply combining these techniques and applying them to various sections of lead-sheet style reductions of pieces, we could plan and prepare our pieces without any duo rehearsal. We simply practiced the techniques, and then waited until May to apply them to the music.

At our rehearsals, Jarred and I had two sheets of paper: a lead sheet of the entire piece in the proper keys and an instruction sheet with the above techniques assigned to a particular player at various points in the form. The technique was highly successful, and even with our limited rehearsals, there was ample time to discuss the technique assignments of each piece and then practice their integration. We had boiled Ferrante and Teicher’s extravagant arrangements down to an exact science and taken our own liberties at modifying the ingredients and presenting our own arrangements.

Programming for a Mixed Audience

For our first show in 2012, we decided on a selection of music that provided the most popular hits of Ferrante and Teicher. We realized that, in order to validate our show in the eyes of our audience, we had to play the pieces that they knew and loved from Ferrante and Teicher, yet add our own interpretations to make the performance unique. After much debate, we settled on a 90-minute program, separated by an intermission, with each half containing several stand-alone pieces and at least two five to ten minute medleys. The second half would also feature more novelties in order to maintain the focus of the audience. At the 2012 show, the first half consisted of:

- “Tonight” from *West Side Story*
- “Canadian Sunset”
- “Autumn Leaves”
- “Raindrops Keep Fallin’ on My Head”
- Themes from *Pirates of the Caribbean*
- Theme from *Love Story*
- *The Sound of Music* Overture

The second half included:

- Theme from *Exodus*
- “Defying Gravity” from *Wicked*
- “Rainbow Ripples,” a xylophone solo, accompanied by piano
- “My Way” and “Time to Say Goodbye”
- A video montage of skits from our segment “Out to Lunch” from the high school morning announcements, accompanied by “You’ve Got a Friend in Me”
- A medley from *Phantom of the Opera*
- A medley of music by George M. Cohan

The Production

Not long after we began learning the selected pieces, we began exploring ways to engage our audience more directly with the music. We decided to deviate from our original plan of producing a “Ferrante and Teicher Tribute” and, instead, we focused on producing an adaptation of their style. We cancelled our order of purple crushed-velvet tuxedos and decided to create an original, more modern concert experience. During high school, our daily segment on the morning announcements, announcing the lunch menu, had established us in the community as a sort of comedy team. Jarred and I felt that, if we combined the serious style of our arrangements with interspersed comedy that capitalized on our established antics, we would achieve a balance that stepped beyond Ferrante and Teicher. From Jarred using the stick of his grand piano to display the Canadian flag during “Canadian Sunset,” to Carson’s unexpected phone call from the Medallion, during

the “Medallion Calls” theme from *Pirates of the Caribbean*, the audience was constantly entertained from both a serious and humorous perspective.

Another goal of the performance was to create a concert that was more modern in appearance than a piano recital. Working with our high school’s audio-visual team, we assembled three large screens throughout the stage, which displayed public domain photos from the motion pictures and musicals from which our music originated. Thanks to a donation from a local floral nursery, the stage was adorned in over thirty ferns and Greco-Roman pillars. Finally, we needed a logo that would differentiate our show from the intimidating aura of classical music concerts, yet still remind people that our show was serious in design and classical in style. We commissioned Jarred’s cousin, Abby Kash, to create a caricature of us, dressed in shirts and ties and playing upright pianos. Within weeks of its release, the caricature logo was on display in our local community and featured on a 15-foot by 15-foot sign outside of our high school.

The Premiere of “Act 1”

The premiere of an Evening with Carson and Jarred in June of 2012 was a great success. Over 700 local community members attended the concert and the reviews were nothing but positive. Thanks to our school’s proximity to Copeland Oaks Retirement Community, among the largest of its kind in the nation, our audience was primarily Baby-Boomers and retired individuals. Our response from the younger generation, however, was stronger than we had anticipated, with about 10% of our audience being of high school age or younger. With CDs of our sale available for \$10, the event returned \$1,180 for the High School Alumni Association. People traveled from all over the state to

witness a Ferrante and Teicher-styled performance. At the time of the concert, we had no intention of doing future duo performances. Soon after, however, numerous letters to the editor in the local newspapers began asking when the next concert would be held.

With the success of Act 1 now behind us, we immediately began plans for another concert the following year. We had made many good decisions in our preparation of Act 1, but we had also learned some valuable lessons, as well. Our turnout at Act 1 was so sizeable that we realized there was an opportunity to charge admission for our next concert. Also, we learned that, by scheduling the concert on a Thursday night, we had deterred some people from attending due to work schedules. Considering these two issues, we determined that our 2013 show would run for two nights: Thursday and Friday, and that we would charge \$5 for admission.

Another issue we faced in planning for Act 2 was that Act 1 had already featured nearly all of the top hits from Ferrante and Teicher. So, for Act 2, we settled on a program that featured music outside of that which the famous duo had performed. In examining our program from 2012, we concluded that the majority of our music had been slower love ballads, so for 2013, we opted for a more upbeat program. We also wanted a program that would excite our younger crowd, which meant choosing pieces written long after Ferrante and Teicher had ceased performing. The first half of Act 2 opened with:

- Theme from *The Apartment*
- “Cast Your Fate to the Wind”
- “Feelings”
- “A Toast to John Williams”
- “Smile”
- “This Time,” an original piece by Jarred Walker
- *Fiddler on the Roof* Revue

The second half featured:

- Theme from *The Godfather*
- “Root Beer Rag”
- Best of the Carpenters
- A Silent Movie
- *The Lion King*
- “Tiger Rag”
- George M. Cohan Medley

Act 2, while virtually equal in turnout to Act 1, did not reach the projections we had hoped, causing us to learn some additional lessons about Act 1. First of all, having the concert on two nights instead of one did not increase net attendance. The first night drew 400 people, while the second night attracted about 250. In the end, the Thursday night crowd was larger than the supposedly more popular Friday night. Second, despite our increased marketing campaign to attract younger viewers, our percentage of audience members under 21 actually declined to 5% on the first night and 15% on the second night. 90% of our crowd on both nights in 2013 consisted of returning customers. Finally, while our \$5 admission did not seem to deter any attendance, it did have an affect that we did not anticipate. Our CD sales, which had topped 250 in 2012 (118 were sold the night of the 2012 concert), barely exceeded 150 over the course of the two nights of 2013. We attributed this to the fact that many people did not realize we were selling a new CD and to the fact that customers were not as compelled to spend \$10 after having already paid us for admission.

The following are the results of 2012 and 2013 as a year-to-year comparison:

Year	2012	2013
Attendance	700 (estimated)	654 [*]
CDs Sold	118	155
Profit for WBAA	\$531	\$2,020

Part 2: The Legalities of Producing a Piano Pops Concert

Having only taken a business law class upon initiating the production of *An Evening with Carson and Jarred*, I learned a great deal about music copyright law that was not only supplemental to my courses in business, but to my music degree, as well. Since nearly all of the music we were performed and sold on our CDs was written within the last 100 years, we had to pay royalties. Under U.S. Copyright Law, there is an exemption made for educational events, and after speaking to the school's attorney, we learned that this could be an option for our performance. Considering that we were high school graduates hosting an event in the summer, however, we decided that it was best to use this exemption only as a last resort.

First, in order for us to perform the music at our concert, our school district had to purchase the proper license to cover live performance of copyrighted works in its auditorium. Until I raised this issue with the district, the administration was unaware that such licenses existed or were necessary. ASCAP, PRO, and BMI, which are artists' organizations that distribute royalties, offer blanket licenses that cover performances of all works by the composers whom they represent. With all of our selections falling under their jurisdictions, the school purchased these licenses. Purchasing mechanical licenses for our recordings, however, was a much more involved process. We began by contacting the music publisher, Hal Leonard, who had published the lead sheets and collections from which we obtained many of our lead sheets. After explaining to them our process of arranging and improvised performing, they replied that they were unable to help us.

Our next stop was the Harry Fox Agency, whose website allowed us to purchase mechanical licenses for most of our songs through the SongFile application. SongFile provides mechanical licenses for recording outputs of under 500 units. Within minutes, we had signed contracts to record all but two of our CD selections. One of our pieces, *Feelings*, was the subject of a court trial over 20 years ago, in which French composer Louis Gaste sued American composer, Morris Albert, who Gaste claimed had stolen his melody for the song *Feelings*. For this reason, 30% of *Feelings* is owned by Harry Fox, while the remaining 70% is owned by Wixen Music Publishing. However, since Wixen Music Publishing does not use a program similar to the Harry Fox SongFile, we were required to purchase a much more expensive mechanical license for their 70% of the song. This license covered 500 CDs, much higher than the 250 we produced and the 155 we sold.

Finally, our inclusion of a medley from the *Lion King* required us to work with the Walt Disney Company. Since Disney offers no online copyright services, I contacted and worked with the Senior Administrator of Licensing for Disney, Sean Novak, to secure a mechanical license for all of the songs used in our *Lion King Medley*. Since our CDs were benefitting the non-profit West Branch Alumni Association, we ended up only including the necessary copyright info on our CDs. We were never charged for our license from Disney.

Reflecting back on the legal experience of producing the concert, I was surprised by how simple it is for someone to perform someone else's composition illegally. Throughout the process, I felt as though I was venturing into uncharted territory. This was certainly the case with Disney, whose licensing setup seemed designed to cater only

to larger clients, while providing no services for smaller outputs like ours. Additionally, there seems to be a major lapse in how these copyright laws are enforced, especially with so many people claiming to take advantage of the religious or educational exception. Still, I am satisfied to know that as small as our production might have been in the scope of these music organizations' larger clients, all of the proper steps were followed and contacts made.

Part 3: Marketing the Concert

From the beginning, our goal was to attract a diverse audience for this concert. Considering our audience from a behavioral perspective, we wanted to draw people who were less familiar with classical music. From a demographic perspective, we would have both old, middle-aged, and young audience members, and this required a combined target market approach. For our product, the concert, we needed something that would appeal to each demographic segment of our audience. For the younger members, the use of familiar melodies from children's films, such as the *Lion King* and *Toy Story*, coupled with the use of the three video screens, helped keep the semi-formal concert stimulating. These pieces were inserted in the second half of each concert, when we figured that stimulation would be needed most. For the middle-aged viewers, we chose a blend of music from artists from the 70's and 80's such as Billy Joel and the Carpenters. Several pieces, such as "Cast Your Fate to the Wind," were appealing to both the middle-aged and the younger demographic, since it combined an 80's song with excerpts from the *Peanuts* cartoons. Our on-stage antics were also targeted at these viewers. We included an interactive element to our Act 2 show, where guests could text in answers to trivia questions for the chance to win prizes. For these viewers, the Ferrante and Teicher

element of the performance held no nostalgic significance, so our aim was to present a humorous piano pops concert. For the largest segment of our target audience, the elderly, we needed to maintain the serious tone and standard selections that they knew and remembered from Ferrante and Teicher. We took this same approach in making our CDs. Realizing that CDs are considered a form of media in the sales decline stage, we predicted that most of the CDs would be purchased by the middle-aged and older audience members. For this reason, the CDs primarily contained tracks of Ferrante and Teicher selections, while leaving off some of the newer pieces, such as *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

For promotion, we relied mainly on publicity, rather than paid advertising. Our promotional campaign included newspaper articles and radio announcements, as well as social media. Realizing the diversity of both our music and our audience, we geared our newspaper articles and radio announcements toward the angle of “Hits from Ferrante and Teicher,” while our social media promotions mentioned our selections from newer movies, such as *Star Wars* and *The Lion King*. The social media promotion was more interactive and included videos that offered sneak previews of the concert. In talking to people after the concert, the majority of people came to know about the event because of the newspaper articles, and we discovered the high value of this form of print media. Finally, the high school drama department created a large sign that was placed in front of our high school, advertising the concert.

After we had made the decision to produce a new show for 2013, we had difficulty determining a name for our concert that would communicate the fact that show would be similar to the previous year, but that the music would be new. Titles such as

Carson and Jarred: An Encore and *The Return of Carson and Jarred* seemed to imply that we would be presenting the same program as 2012. After much debate, we settled on *An Evening with Carson and Jarred: Act 2*, and it achieved the desired marketing effect. Determining an appropriate admission price was also an important decision. Some attendees of Act 1 remarked that they would have paid \$50 to see a show like ours, while we knew that any price greater than \$10 would position ourselves as more expensive than high school athletics and other events in the area. Then again, we realized that any type of music concert in our area was always free, from community band concerts, to touring groups, to any type of classical performance. We also had to consider that families with younger children would be paying \$15 or more for the performance, and we did not want to discourage attendance from this demographic. After much consideration, we decided on a \$5 admission charge. This price was selected so that a family of four could still enjoy the show for \$20. We hoped that the price of admission would not impact our CD sales, even though it did.

In packaging our CDs, we used our caricature logo from the concert for the entire front of the case, listing the most popular songs on the front cover and the complete list of tracks on the inside cover. To reduce costs, we decided to sign the CDs individually, rather than create a CD label. This made each CD seem personal to our older customers, who typically like to have their CDs signed. Our Act 1 CD case was blue, and our Act 2 case was red. We hoped that these solid colors would make our CDs easily distinguishable to our older target audience and would advertise the fact that it was a new CD to people who glanced at our CD sales table. It also made the product appealing to our younger crowd, whose parents bought several copies of our CDs.

Looking Forward

This winter, Jarred and I will return to the stage to present our third installment of the piano duo pops concert. The show will feature favorites from our previous two concerts, new twists on holiday classics, as well as new selections. This upcoming concert has spurred the creation of our own website, which can be found at <http://crweingart.wix.com/carsonjarred>.

An Evening with Carson and Jarred

A Pops Concert
on 2 Pianos

ACT
2



Thursday, June 20 & Friday, June 21
7:00pm

West Branch Community Auditorium

*FEATURING MUSIC FROM FERRANTE AND TEICHER, FIDDLER ON THE
ROOF, JOHN WILLIAMS, LION KING, CARPENTERS, AND MUCH MORE!*

\$5 General Admission

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Part 4: Synthesizing Shostakovich, *Fantasia*, and Silent Film

Having performed primarily classical music my entire life, I have always been troubled by the large disconnection between its performers and its listeners. I fear that classical music's performers have become its listeners, and that modern audiences have retreated from the concert halls. During 2013, while Act 2 was still in the planning phase, I performed a solo recital for the Alliance Area Concert Association, located about 8 miles from the stage of *An Evening with Carson and Jarred*. Not only did my classical program for the concert series take about twenty times more preparation to perform, it also featured what I considered to be higher quality music than the easy listening material presented at Acts 1 and 2. Yet, the response to my classical program was thoroughly eclipsed by the local community's enthrallment with the Carson and Jarred show. One audience member even joked, "we want less Bach and more Bacharach!" From that point forward, I began exploring ways to add a serious classical piece to our program for Act 2. The problem was that a classical piece alone would seem awkward and inaccessible next to the other lighter pieces on our Act 2 program. So, Jarred and I decided to perform an experiment that combined Shostakovich, *Fantasia*, and silent film.

The piece I selected was the First Movement of the Second Piano Concerto by Dmitri Shostakovich. I had already performed this piece on a recital at Ball State, as well as at the 2013 Ball State Undergraduate Concerto Competition and on the winner's concert with the Ball State Symphony Orchestra. In order to help this more complex piece blend with our other selections, I began exploring alternative forms of performing classical music for an untrained audience. One of the often-overlooked uses of classical music in the early twentieth century was for silent movies. Jarred and I were already well

known from our morning announcements skits, so it made sense for us to star in a silent film for the concert. However, unlike the silent film accompaniments of the early 1900s, our movie would be designed to portray the music, rather than the music portraying the movie. In a way, we were combining the concept of silent film accompaniment with the concept of Walt Disney's *Fantasia* film, in which the animation is crafted to the music. The success of this experiment proved promising and convinced me that this technique can be used to help revive classical music for modern audiences. The following is a discussion of the experiment and its outcome.

In order to tailor a film to a piece of music, it was necessary to explore the historical uses of classical music in silent film accompaniment. Our plan was to find the technique by which classical music was applied to film, and then, reverse the process and make our silent film fit with the music. As Paolo Usai explains in his book, *Burning Passions: An Introduction to Silent Film*, silent films were never actually silent at all, for the music played a key role in helping connect the viewer and the motion picture. Silent movies were often accompanied by a score for piano, organ, or orchestra. Depending on the popularity of the particular film and the location where the film was being screened, the accompaniment would range from a specially commissioned score to a cue sheet naming suitable pieces of classical music to play at the performer's discretion.² At the same time, many movie houses that operated with less experienced pianists depended on a repertory of free public domain songs, often popular tunes and folk melodies. These pieces were embellished and modified to fit within the desired time interval through improvisation and variation. When looking at the lifespan of silent films, many of the

² Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Burning Passions: An Introduction to the Study of Silent Cinema*, (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 14.

early films used primarily improvisation and popular songs, moving to more classical repertoire near the center of the era. By the end of the silent film era in the late 1920s, commissioned blockbuster scores were the norm, often requiring an in-house orchestra to perform.³ In films that featured singers in the motion picture, movie houses would hire opera singers to match the lip movements of the singers on screen. These singers were often positioned beside or behind the screen. The first mainstream classical composer to write for the emerging art of film was Camille Saint-Saëns, whose scores for *Calmettes* and *Le Bargy's L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* forged a close connection between art music and the popular art of cinema.⁴

It is often overlooked that music was present both in the presentation of the film and the filming of the production. Live orchestras would be on site at the filming to provide music to set the mood for the scene to be recorded. Many times, film directors would choose music that they felt would have a desired effect on an actor or actress in order to evoke a certain emotion. Other times, music was used for its sheer volume, which required actors to scream their parts louder to overcome the dynamic of the music.⁵ When describing these differences, Usai notes that, “here the needs of the scholar and those of the spectator part company.” In other words, the 1920s spectator was often unaware of how and why music was being used in a film, while, today, scholars continue to search for those specific pieces of music that accompanied each film. Music has also become a valuable tool in reconstructing lost films. For instance, when films have been destroyed by fire, salvaged cue sheets with names of classical pieces have been

³ Norman King, “The Sound of Silents,” *Silent Film*, 33.

⁴ King, 34.

⁵ Usai, 18.

used to fill in the missing parts of the narrative. In recent years, many silent films have been rereleased with reproductions of their original scores. However, purists note that this still does not replicate the original silent movie experience of hearing a live ensemble playing either in front of or behind the movie screen.⁶

It should be noted that, primarily, music was meant to compliment the film, and not vice versa. Ultimately, the movie house director's own tastes and the abilities of his performers determined which music accompanied a silent film. Music in silent films was essentially mood music in the beginning, playing the role of accompanist to the drama on the screen. However, an audience's understanding of the intricacy of the plots often depended on the skill of the musical performer, whose knowledge of the film allowed him or her to use the music to accentuate gags or highlight key moments in the drama. This led to new advances in silent film in France in the late 1910s, with the innovations of Abel Gance, for whom sound and music became major players in the film.⁷ Similar to Wagner's use of the orchestra as a key player in his musical dramas, Gance saw music as a driving determinant of the action on stage.⁸ Gance's philosophy became the primary aim of Disney's *Fantasia* films, some thirty years later. A breakthrough in French musical-filmmaking occurred with the premiere of Gance's *La Dixieme Symphonie*, a film whose story centered on writing a symphony. The story itself, including the movement on the screen and pacing of the action, is carefully coordinated with the "symphony" played by the movie house orchestra. Gance commissioned the actual symphony to composer Michel-Maurice Levy, yet the final piece proved too difficult and

⁶ Usai, 24.

⁷ King, 31.

⁸ Peter Franklin, "Underscoring Drama—Picturing Music," *Wagner and Cinema*, 59.

complex for most movie house pianists and orchestras. Instead, standard classical pieces were often substituted, which essentially destroyed the aim of the project. One interesting trick employed by Gance was for the film to conclude with the orchestra conductor bowing on screen, at the same time as the movie house director would bow, helping to fuse the idea of film reality and musical reality.⁹ Such a theme is present in Disney's *Fanatasia*, where Mickey Mouse walks on stage to shake hands with maestro Leopold Stokowski.¹⁰ We also incorporated this technique into our film.

Though the *Dixieme Symphonie* was not presented in the fashion in which it was planned, it spurred a new way of thinking about film as an original art form, rather than pure entertainment. Directors now aimed to create black and white symphonies, using film to paint a musical opera. According to James Buhler, film was becoming the Wagnerian realization of *gesamtkunstwerk*, or culmination of all the arts. According to actor Henri Langlois, movies were the ultimate triumph of “uniting photography and Rachmaninov.”¹¹ Even though for many audiences, especially those with little understanding of music, the result was purely a melodrama, film was becoming something that could be universally appreciated and universally significant: a true union of the artistic elite and the ordinary audience member. For filmmakers like Gance, it was not a matter of whether or not the audience recognized their appreciation of the music. Instead, what mattered was that they appreciated the music through the film.¹² This goal was the aim of our silent movie. French filmmakers continued expanding on this idea,

⁹ King, 34.

¹⁰ Robin Allan, *Walt Disney and Europe*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 93.

¹¹ King, 35.

¹² King, 37.

working to ensure that the characters' movement on stage, their interactions with others, and even their realization of emotions and key moments in the plots, corresponded with the elegance and flow of the music.¹³ This kind of film was hailed as a new art, with Gance's film, *La Roue*, called "the exemplification of the music of images, moving through from a slow indolent melody to a scherzo with abrupt modulations, fugal entries, leitmotifs, and a development into polyphony and polytonality," according to musician and film critic Emile Vuillermoz.¹⁴ The French filmmakers believed that they had discovered the cinema of the future. Unfortunately, their efforts were eclipsed by the dawn of films with spoken dialogue.

When examining the techniques by which music was connected to film, it must be noted that late romantic composer Richard Wagner played an influential role. With many writers of the time realizing that film could be the fulfillment for *gesamtkunstwerk*, many musical directors at movie houses began incorporating Wagner's ideas into their silent film accompaniments.¹⁵ The most popular Wagnerian trait was the leitmotif, a short theme used to signify an important character, emotion, force, or object. In a Wagnerian opera, a leitmotifs would be used to foreshadow the plot. In the same way, musicians could use established leitmotifs for specific film characters to foreshadow these characters' impending significance in a particular scene.¹⁶ While these ideas seemed ingenious in theory, they were often difficult to execute effectively in practice. Buhler notes that, often, movie houses would only screen a film for a few days, in combination with several other constantly changing films. The movie house musician's limited

¹³ Buhler, 37.

¹⁴ King, 36.

¹⁵ Peter Franklin, "Underscoring Drama—Picturing Music," *Wagner and Cinema*, 59.

¹⁶ Buhler, 33.

exposure to the film would make it difficult to assign appropriate motifs to particular characters when practically sight-reading the film. One particular development in film that made this even more difficult was the newfound mobility of cameras. With this innovation, a scene could be a combination of many quick camera shots, making it hard for musicians to maintain continuity in the accompaniment.

To remedy this, musicians began to employ an approach known as topographical reading. This process involved a hasty application of appropriate music where it seemed necessary to the plot, upon first seeing a film.¹⁷ According Clarence Sinn, a writer for *The Moving Picture World* and a proponent of this school of accompaniment, music should only have “a psychological bearing on the situation as depicted on the screen.” He laid out several techniques and rules of thumb regarding silent movie accompaniment.¹⁸ He felt that music should only attract attention to that which was important. If an Indian man walked on screen, but was insignificant to the main point of the narrative, exotic Indian music should not be used. This leads to his second point, which was to maintain continuity in the music, even if the camera were switching angles or even scenes. Rather than changing music at every cut in a scene, the musician should determine whose point of view or what mood was the most important and play to that point of view for the duration of the scene.¹⁹ Sinn also felt that music was essential for setting the mood of a scene, especially moods of foreboding. Since the musician and the audience were seeing the film for the first time, there would be little danger in following along with their initial reactions, which would only make surprising moments more effective. Finally, Sinn

¹⁷ Buhler, 31.

¹⁸ Buhler 27.

¹⁹ Buhler, 31.

believed in the Wagnerian ideal of the orchestra commenting on and playing a part in the action, using it to underscore certain elements that did not appear visually in the film. If the actors in the film sensed danger, the music was to point out that the danger was indeed present. Music was more than mere accompaniment.²⁰

Besides the obvious drama and cartoonish turmoil of the first movement of Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto, the composer's connection with film music and silent film accompaniment also expanded our understanding of silent film accompaniment techniques. In 1923, looking to earn money wherever he could, an impoverished Dmitri Shostakovich took an exam designed for aspiring silent film accompanists. The exam tested a player's ability to adapt quickly to different styles of music, a skill at which the gifted Shostakovich excelled. He passed the exam and began working as a silent film pianist at Svetlaia Lenta cinema in St. Petersburg. His work was highly regarded by the patrons and the management, but Shostakovich soon grew wary of playing the same hackneyed tunes over and over with each rescreening of the movie.²¹ Before long, he saw this stale career as a way to influence and test some of his own compositions. He did this with his First Symphony, which has been noted for its film-like structure.²² After leaving the job, he began writing short pieces with generic but imaginative titles such as "chase scene" or "reverie" as a way to make money, since such short pieces could be used and vamped in numerous silent movies. Throughout his compositional career, Shostakovich worked on forty films, most for Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. In one of Shostakovich's first film scores, *New Babylon*, he

²⁰ Buhler, 38.

²¹ John Riley, *Dmitri Shostakovich: A Life in Film*, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2005), 2.

²² Riley, 3.

encountered problems lining up his score with the numerous cuts made to the film in the days before its release. To remedy this, he developed the practice of writing drum rolls and repeats of various lengths into the film score to help performers align the music with the movie more effectively.²³ Such techniques can even be seen on the micro level in his Second Piano Concerto, and this concept was essentially reversed and applied to the filmmaking of our silent movie.

Our idea of creating a film based on music, rather than vice versa, was based on the idea of Disney's *Fantasia*, released in 1940. After the success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Walt Disney embarked on a partnership with Leopold Stokowski, the conductor of the Philadelphia Philharmonic. Disney wanted to use the new medium of color animation to bring classical music out of the concert hall and into the lives of modern people.²⁴ Admitting that his knowledge of music was minimal, Disney relied on Stokowski's expertise to devise a program of eight classical pieces, which would be animated with storylines tailored to meet the music. The entire program would be unified by the themes of natural order and power.²⁵ The artists behind *Fantasia*, basking in the success of *Snow White*, opted for a more avant-garde style in their animation of the musical pieces. Disney's intent was for *Fantasia* to be rereleased every year, each time with one or two new pieces, similar to an annual orchestra concert. However, the United States' involvement in World War II spelled the doom of the film, with its lofty themes leaving audiences puzzled and music critics fuming. The music critics were appalled that something like animation would be applied to the music of the masters, with *Musical*

²³ Riley, 12.

²⁴ Robin Allan, *Walt Disney and Europe*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 93.

²⁵ Allan, 94.

Opinion's Richard Capell saying, "*Fantasia* will be dead before this summer's fashion in women's hats." A critic for the *New York Times* wrote, "to match Disney's cartoons with the music of eight masters – what a perilous thing to do!"²⁶ Yet, in an interview with the Royal College of Music, Stokowski said, "I often receive letters from people that say, 'Thank you for doing *Fantasia* because I was afraid to go to the concert hall. I don't know why I was afraid, but I was. When I went to *Fantasia*, I heard the great masters' music and realized it was not at all painful. On the contrary, I enjoyed it.'"²⁷ By the time the film was released to theatres, the distributor RKO had reduced it from two hours to eighty minutes. It was released as a double bill, alongside a western film. For the rest of his life, Walt Disney never regretted his decision to make *Fantasia*, but admitted that, given another chance, he would never have done it.²⁸

I first studied *Fantasia* during my sophomore year, as a student in an Honors Colloquium on Disney. It seems that Disney's attempt at redelivering classical music to a modern audience was simply marred by its ambition. His characterization of the film as a concert outside the concert hall seemed to recognize that the problem was the concert hall itself, rather than the music. The other issue with *Fantasia* is perhaps associated with Disney's over-eagerness to depart from the traditional storytelling approach of *Snow White* in favor of the more abstract style. The leap between the two seems to have been too drastic, with *Fantasia* still appearing too sophisticated, in spite of its effort to negate that perspective of classical music. I also believe that Disney neglected the strong definitions of film accompaniment I have mentioned previously in the silent film

²⁶ Allan, 92.

²⁷ Allan, 94.

²⁸ Allan, 97.

discussion. Perhaps taking Sinn's techniques and reversing them would have achieved a more approachable marriage of film to music. Yet, the reaction of the fan that tells Stokowski that she "was afraid to go the concert hall, but really enjoyed it," was exactly what we had in mind when we decided to make a silent movie for our Act 2 concert. Rather than selling the concerto as the main feature of the concert, it appeared as a surprise, with none of the advertisements mentioning it, whatsoever. This allowed it to be presented in the least threatening environment possible.

In adapting the Second Piano Concerto to a silent film, there were some logistical obstacles that needed to be cleared before developing the plot. Since the movie needed to fit with the music, and not vice versa, and the music was being performed live by a duo, with the movie being a fixed length, lining up specific instances was going to be difficult. This issue was solved by creating the illusion of an eight-minute film through the use of much smaller segments. Each of these segments could be started at select moments in the score, known as rehearsal numbers. If the chase scene needed to start at rehearsal 8, for example, then rehearsal 7 could be cut short, so that 8 would start at exactly the right moment. With this technique now in mind, we set out to determine which moments in the piece required select action to occur. Luckily, the rehearsal numbers were already well coordinated with sections that personified a specific mood, meaning we could tailor the action to the music at that particular rehearsal spot. We then began labeling each section of the score with different moods or emotions. For instance, "fire" was written above rehearsal 11 long before the fire scene was envisioned. The pickups to 11 sounded foreboding, while the cadenza was a contrast of joy and irritation, and the large middle section seemed ideal for a chase scene.

With the music now labeled, we set out on our next task of finding a story that could tie all of these emotions together. Furthermore, the story would need to be feasible for two males on a tight budget. After much consideration, we settled on a story that acted as a “behind the scenes” tour of the day of the concert. Using the techniques of Sinn and topographical reading, described before, we worked the process in reverse to come up with an appropriate story for the music. For example, the gallop theme became Jarred’s leitmotif, used as he scrambles out of bed in the morning and at the end when he hurries to get backstage. During the section at rehearsal 5, a continuous mood prevailed in the music, but according to Sinn, we could do several short scene changes under that same umbrella. At the same time, only one point of view should be projected. With that in mind, we took Jarred’s “ironing board fiasco” to be the main focus.

In the end, we created and presented a visual interpretation of the score to our audience, in the same way that a silent movie house pianist would present his topographical reading of the plot through his music. Though there was a technical glitch on the first night that skipped a portion of our movie, the second night went as planned, with the film aligning with our accompaniment. The audience reaction both nights was startling and encouraging. People made a point to attend both nights of the concert just to see the silent movie again. Several audience members remarked that they never knew classical music could be so lively and so much fun. How satisfying that, at a piano pops concert, the majority of the audience left saying Shostakovich was their favorite composer. Perhaps what was most successful about our approach was that we did not have to explain the aforementioned process to our audience. In fact, we told them the opposite. We explained to them that we had created the story first, and then looked for

the right piece to back it up. Their profound appreciation of the score after seeing the film, however, confirmed for me that they received the desired effect, whether they realized it or not. A copy of the silent movie is located at the end of the binder, as part of the project supplements.

Perhaps this is the ultimate problem with our current delivery of classical music. So often today, I hear of orchestras performing concerts where a movie is shown on a large screen, and the orchestra simply provides the sound track. But, in planning such programs, aren't these classical musicians actually disregarding the advice of Wagner, that the music should play a central role in the storyline? In the end, deciding whether the music has been matched to the movie or the movie matched to the music is for the educated to debate. For the untrained mass audience, they either understand it or they do not.

In my time at Ball State, I have been troubled by the disappointing turnout at our recitals. While some musicians acknowledge that classical music is a dying art, for much of the general public, it seems to have been nearly fifty years since it was buried. While I acknowledge that the reverse silent film idea is not a solution to reviving classical music in itself, it seems to be a possible step in the right direction. The critics will always have their concert halls, but the general public needs an alternative way to experience classical music. Once steps like this are taken, however, and the public is reengaged, the possibilities are endless. Imagine a theme park ride patterned after Smetana's *Moldau* that takes guests on a journey down a river, where each of the pieces' instances of musical imagery are fully realized, not just in sound, but in multiple senses. The beauty is that the rider need not realize what he or she has technically experienced. What is

important is that the art is in use and is being appreciated. In the end, the name of the piece, the composer, the opus number, and the date are merely indications on the score.

The music itself is the art that must continue to be communicated.

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PROJECT SUPPLEMENTS

Video Recording of 2012 Concert

CD Sold at 2012 Concert

Video Recording of 2013 Concert

CD Sold at 2013 Concert

DVD of Silent Movie and Photos from 2013 Concert

Program for 2012 Concert

Program for 2013 Concert

Poster Advertisement for 2013 Concert

Newspaper Article for 2013 Concert

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE FOR THE 2013 CONCERT

Local pianists to perform at West Branch

June 14, 2013

Salem News

BELOIT- Local pianists Carson Weingart and Jarred Walker will take the stage next week at West Branch to present a pops concert on two pianos. "An Evening with Carson and Jarred: Act 2," will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday in the West Branch Community Auditorium. Admission to the concert is \$5, with proceeds from the tickets benefiting the West Branch Alumni Association. Tickets will only be sold at the door. Last summer, over 700 local community members enjoyed the pops concert, which featured music made popular by the renowned piano duo Ferrante and Teicher. This year promises even more fun and entertainment, with all-new music from "The Lion King," "Fiddler on the Roof," the Carpenters, John Williams, Vince Guaraldi and Billy Joel, as well as Ferrante and Teicher favorites like "Theme from the Apartment" and "Theme from the Godfather."

"We were so thrilled with the great turnout at our concert last year, that we decided to do the concert two nights this year," said Jarred Walker, who has studied music education at Bowling Green State University.



West Branch alumni Jarred Walker, left, and Carson Weingart will present a piano concert at 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday in the West Branch Community Auditorium to benefit the West Branch Alumni Association. Tickets are \$5 each and will only be sold at the door. (Submitted photo)

"We've also got some very special surprises in store this year," said Carson Weingart, who is majoring in piano performance at Ball State University. "If you liked Act I last year, you'll love Act II this year."

Both Weingart and Walker are 2010 graduates of West Branch High School. CDs will also be on sale at the concert. A reception sponsored by the West Branch Alumni Association will follow.

The West Branch Community Auditorium is handicap accessible.